AIPAC SPEECH 2013 – MINISTER OF DEFENSE

EHUD BARAK (2,281 WORDS) – DRAFT 6

הדגשתי את החלקים בצהוב שאני חושב שאפשר להוציא

Compliments and thanks

- Thank you for such a warm welcome.
- What an indescribable feeling to be once again surrounded by so many **true friends** in the capital of the world's greatest democracy.
- Members of the Administration, Members of Congress, Ambassadors Michael Oren and Dan Shapiro, distinguished ambassadors from all around the world…. Michael, Rosey, Bob, David, Howard and Richard, AIPAC members… old and young…
- Good evening to **you all** and thank you for having me.
- Members of Congress, if **only** I had time to thank you all individually… but there are **more** congressmen and women here than could fill our whole Knesset! **But** I am certainly **not** complaining…

- It is **your** toil and **your** graft – **your** unwavering support – that keeps ***us*** safe. I have six humble words for all of you: Thank you, thank you, thank you.
- I would like to express my personal appreciation to President Obama and Secretary Panetta for their **resolute** backing of Israel.
- History will surely record your immeasurable contribution to the **strength** of Israel and the maintenance of the **truly** special relationship between our peoples.
- On behalf of the people of Israel, I wish Secretary Hagel **all the best** in his new role.
- I have no doubt that as Secretary of Defense he will **serve his country** with the **same pride** and **honor** with which he served both on the battlefield and in Congress.
- Moving from the Hill – down to the grassroots, the young activists we see – and hear – in this room today: **You are the future**!
- When I speak to young American supporters of Israel, it is the **depth** of your **commitment** that is so uplifting.

- A **commitment** which is so lucidly **dictated** by the head… yet so deeply underpinned by the heart…
- A commitment to ideals, which in the age of Facebook and Twitter could be brushed quietly into a corner, is LOUDLY on show this evening. **You are the future!**

US-Israel Relationship and Two Way Street

- As the former Prime Minister and Chief of Staff of the IDF, and as the Defense Minister of the State of Israel for the past six years, I have witnessed firsthand the **importance** of **solidarity**.
- The display of **united strength** and **solidarity** in the **face** of determined enemies is crucial to both **win wars**… and **maintain peace**.
- Very **few** figures have embodied the strength and solidarity I am talking about more than my friend **Dan Inouye**. Dan – **may his memory be blessed** – was a **true hero** of democracy. A **passionate friend** of Israel. And a **dear friend** to me.
- As we say in Hebrew – אתה חסר חבר – you are… and will be missed. Thank you for everything Dan.
- It is as a direct result of the efforts of people like Dan in Congress, as well as you – all across America – that our alliance is **stronger than ever.**

- And thanks to the **rock solid** US-Israel relationship, our capacity to defend ourselves, that is to say - Israel's 'Qualitative – Military – Edge', has been guaranteed for years to come!

Iron-Dome + Tough Neighborhood

- With **US** support and the **ingenuity** of our R&D personnel, Israel finds itself at the cutting edge of missile defense technology.
- We have an Israeli designed system – the 'Iron Dome' – which recently intercepted over 400 incoming terrorist rockets. Shot them out of the sky!
- It is the equivalent of hitting a bullet with a bullet!
- Just last week on the shores of the Mediterranean, we – the US **and** Israel – conducted a successful exoatmospheric flight test of the new Arrow 3 interceptor. This will shoot ballistic missiles out of space!
- The State of Israel simply would not be **the strong island of stability** without one crucial **constant.**
- YOU
- The United States of America. Its people. Its leadership. Its Jewish community.

- The US and Israel are more than friends. We are family. We look **after** each other. And we will continue to look **out** for each other.

Middle East Tough Neighborhood - Not Zero-Sum game - Regional Security – Palestinians - Iran

- We live in a tough neighborhood.
- I will never grow tired of repeating these harsh realities: Where we live, there is **no mercy for the weak**. There **is no second chance** for those who cannot defend themselves.
- Israel is the **strongest** country in the region and the only **genuinely open democracy**; a villa in the jungle as I once called it.
- We have witnessed an **unprecedented geopolitical earthquake** in the last three years – shattering the decades' old regional order.
- There are two clear lessons and one insight we ***must*** take away from this period of transition:

  - Lesson 1: **We must be modest with our predictions**. Take Egypt as an example;

everyone – including Mubarak – was taken by surprise by the nature and scale of the revolution.

- Lesson 2: When allies and friends – as well as high profile players back home – look at developments in the region and tell you: **Don't worry**… If worse comes to worst – the world **will not stand idly by** when massacres are carried out… the world **will not stand idly by** and watch nations develop nuclear weapons… if all else fails – **they tell me** – the world will come forward and act!
- Well **clearly** ,we can**not** take this for granted.
- Look at North Korea - the world watched Pyongyang develop and test nuclear weapons.
- Look at Syria – over 60,000 deaths – and the world remains inactive.

- And the **insight**…

- Many of our best friends and allies, as well as some colleagues in Israel, believe that the causal link – the underlying reason – for *all* the problems in the

Middle East… is our **inability** to solve the conflict with the Palestinians.

- Well, the world is finally beginning to understand what we **always** knew: This could not be further from the truth.
- Even if a peace agreement with the Palestinians had been signed and sealed a long time ago:
    - Iran would **still** be pursuing the nuclear option as part of their hegemonic power grab in the Gulf
    - Syria would **still** be mired in a bloody civil war
    - The Muslim Brotherhood would **still** have come to power in Egypt
- However, and it is **a big however**; the peace process certainly should not be ignored.
- But **first**, the greatest challenge facing Israel, the region and the world today… is a radical Islamic Republic of Iran – **racing** after nuclear weapons.
- Just six years ago, they had **800kg of low enriched Uranium**.
- Today, ladies and gentlemen, they have **6.5 metric tons** of LEU, and approximately **170kg of Uranium enriched to 20%**.

- A **nuclear** Iran is a challenge for the **entire** world. But naturally, more so for Israel.
- A nuclear Iran spells the end of **any** conceivable non-proliferation regime. **Saudi Arabia**, **Turkey** and **Egypt** will eventually follow suit.
- The countdown towards nuclear materials falling into the hands of terrorists will begin.
- Iran will **speed up** its **exportation** of **terror** - in Afghanistan, India, Yemen, Somalia, as well as in Europe and South America. Their global proxies – including Hezbollah in Lebanon and Islamic Jihad in the Gaza Strip, will become emboldened.
- We **cannot** forget that this extreme regime also threatens to wipe Israel **out the pages of history**.
- Diplomatic efforts continue, yet based on past experience… they appear to be headed towards a futile deadlock.
- Sanctions are **unprecedented**, I should tell you honestly – while of course we must exhaust all diplomatic means – I am **not** convinced they will work.

- Therefore **all options must remain** on the table.

- We have stated this time and again.

- And we expect all those who say it… to mean it… ladies and gentlemen… **We mean it.**

- A nuclear Iran is the most imminent and acute danger to the stability of the **entire region**.
- It therefore demands a **regional** response.
- Islamic fundamentalist terror is spreading rapidly across the Middle East.
- The moderates across the region are recognizing the growing necessity of missile defense technology. (אפשר להוריד כי תיכף נפרט)
- So what is to be done?

- We are currently in a transition period in Israel and the new government will have to shape its own approach – but please allow me, before I leave, to share with you my vision.

- The Middle East is a **Gestalt** – a body made up of interdependent entities; every reaction has its regional reaction.
- We should find a way to start building a **'Regional Security Framework'**…
- This would be built around the **common** challenges – of fundamentalist Islamic terror, border security, missile defense… and of course, the joint threat of Iran's nuclear program combined with their declared aggressive hegemonic intentions.
- Led by the US, such a **'Regional Security Framework'** could provide a **host of synergies** for all its regional participants.
- A **daring peace initiative** with the Palestinians can serve as **the** platform **upon which the regional actors can unite**.
- Two democratic nation states, living side by side in peace and security, in the heart of the Middle East. A two-state solution. The only solution.
- Peace is a compelling imperative for us in order to secure our future as a Jewish and democratic state; not out of any love for the Palestinians… it is in our own self interest.

- Believe me I know from personal experience that the Palestinians are not **easy** partners for peace.
- They hold the lion's share of the responsibility for past failures.
- And if a fully fledged agreement is not feasible – and only a candid, sincere effort can determine this – if this is the case; we have to try and achieve a reasonable, fair, interim agreement.
- I am convinced this is possible – while guaranteeing our security and vital interests.
- And **if** an **interim** agreement is unobtainable, then we should consider **unilateral actions** in order to place a wedge on this dangerous slippery slope towards a **binational** state.
- It involves **demarcating** a line within the land of Israel… Within which we incorporate the settlement blocs and a **solid** Jewish majority for generations to come.

- We will ensure **a long-term military presence** along the River Jordan… because… and let me make one thing clear – **the security of Israel is non-negotiable**.

- Tough decisions must be taken; but **peace is** possible.
- And as our sages taught us: *"If not now… **when**?"*
- President Abbas – **now is the time** to start talking!
- I **strongly** believe that this interconnected policy triangle – (1) the Regional Security Framework … (2) peace with the Palestinians… and (3) tackling Iran – this is the most effective approach to tackle the innumerable challenges on Israel's horizon.

Vision, Society, Personal and Conclusion

- Israel, surrounded by this geopolitical earthquake, has been experiencing its own tremors of change: A **renaissance** of political **activism**, an **outburst** of **social participation**.
- Just under two years ago we witnessed the people of Israel taking to the streets… demanding a redistribution of the economic and social burden: A fairer slicing of the pie.
- Just last month – **no less than 53** new members of the Knesset were sworn in. That is nearly 50% of the serving members of Knesset… **OUT…** (Present company included!).

- **That** is what I call democracy in action. A democracy *I* can be proud of. A democracy *you* can be proud of.
- Winston Churchill said, "to ***improve*** is to change; to ***be*** **perfect…** is to change often."
- At the rate by which we have elections – we must be nearing perfection soon!
- Ladies and gentlemen, I was born under the British mandate 71 years ago.
- And now I am finishing my tenure as the Minister of Defense of an **independent Jewish state.**
- In my life, I have seen a lot. I even **fought** terrorists dressed up as a pretty young girl in Lebanon…
- However, I could not have **dreamed** of some of the technologies we have today already saving both American ***and*** Israeli lives!
- However, the time has come for me to move on. I have spent half a century serving my country.
- I often rub my eyes in disbelief when I look at what we – as a nation – have achieved… all in under 65 years.
- We have an **agile** and **adaptive** high-tech and export oriented economy.

- Our start-up culture flourishes on an ***eruption*** of talent and an underlying entrepreneurial spirit amongst our youth.
- The future is bright, and **my vision for Israel is clear**.
- A **strong**, self-confident, flourishing Jewish and democratic state, living in peace and security with its neighbors.
- An exemplary **state** and world leader in science, technology, education, culture, infrastructure, quality of life and, finally, standard of living.
- A country in which our children will **want** to live.
- A country which you – our family abroad – will want to be associated with.
- A **pillar** of **pride** which you can look at and say: That is our Jewish Home.
- Ladies and gentlemen, we are at a **decisive juncture in our history**…
- May we have the **strength** and **courage** to make those tough decisions for the future **peace** and **security** of the State of Israel.

- We are in this boat together… and there is **simply no other nation on earth** with which we would rather share the ride.
- Thank you…